

ESTIMATED UPTAKE OF GM CANOLA DOUBLED



With Environment Minister Donna Farragher
See Story on Page 2

WA Farmers have doubled the estimated uptake of GM canola.

This follows the defeat of yet another GM disallowance moved by the Greens and supported by Labor in the Legislative Council in May.

I believe that one of the reasons so many “GM myths” have been perpetuated in WA is that the Western Australian Department of Agriculture had no Fact Sheets available on its website during the term of the previous government.

I urge anyone with an open mind to do some myth-busting by going the Department’s website for Fact Sheets such as *Misconceptions about GM Technology*. These clarify issues like cross-pollination, gene transfer, and accidental contamination.

People who are keen to separate fact from fiction can check out a website called “*Academics Review*” which scientifically reviews the top 20 urban myths about GM crops made by author Jeffrey Smith in his book “*Genetic Roulette*”.

Further information on GM canola is on my website.





Ministerial Spin

If you get down and dirty in politics you end up on *Inside Cover*. And that's exactly what happened when Grant Wynne from the ABC sent *The West Australian* a picture of me helping to dig out the Minister's bogged 4WD on a trip to Kalbarri. We were there to release 50 Tamar wallabies translocated from Pingelly.



New Patrol Boat

The launch of the new long-range patrol boat PV Houtman by Fisheries Minister Norman Moore was a proud day for Geraldton, where my electorate office is based. The \$3.36m craft was designed in Port Dennison and built in Geraldton, from where it will operate along the West Coast and Gascoyne bioregions.



Police Radio Communications System



Labor's Margaret Quirk MLA should hang her head in shame for trying to shift the blame for the problems in regional police communications.

Ms Quirk was a Minister when police had to ask truckies to radio for help for accident victims. Some police stations operated on a mix of mobile phones, HF radio - and silence.

Where was Ms Quirk's concern when I lobbied her Government four times in parliament for an upgrade commitment? Media articles and speeches on my website tell the story.

Last year the Barnett government allocated \$20m to extend the network. Handheld and in-vehicle computers were rolled out to regional police. The current budget provided \$80.3 million for communication upgrades and \$120 million to eliminate mobile phone blackspots in the bush.

State Budget

Whilst the Rudd budget didn't do much to break the drought in the Agricultural Region, the Barnett budget provided some welcome relief. It includes \$123m for assets in the Wheatbelt, and \$77m for assets in the Mid West.

In the 2010-11 budget, 58 percent of road funding dollars will be spent on country roads. The Barnett government will provide \$136m directly to local governments for construction and maintenance of their own roads - up from \$123m last financial year.

As a Regional Member with grandchildren at bush schools I was pleased to see \$100.5m allocated to upgrade country schools over four years, \$10.9m to upgrade the orange bus service (including airconditioning), \$51.9m over four years to upgrade regional residential colleges, and continued funding for educational boarding allowances. I lobbied hard for the replacement of the Meekathara School of the Air and welcome the \$3.7m allocation.

The first part of the grain rail package has been formalised. There is now some recognition that this is just the beginning of the rail rescue plans, and the WAFF President has gone on record* to say he is optimistic that this funding will get the ball rolling. *ABC720 21/5/10

At last, small businesses located more than 25km from a substation can wave goodbye to electricity headworks charges and say hello to refunds.

Read my Budget Reply speech on my website.



Drought Assistance

The proof will be in the pudding as the trial drought assistance package is rolled out and assessed.

On 17 June *The West Australian* reported that many farmers are "staring down the barrel of a make-or-break season with grain production tipped to fall in WA for the first time in five years." On top of that, farmers will need above-average yields to counter low wheat prices. Those who are on the margins will be anxious for practical outcomes in the trial package.

The trial is a partnership with the Federal Government. Fact sheets on the main components - including farm planning, grants, income support and exit funding - are on my website.

I have had some mixed feed-back, and will be interested to see the farmer take-up on each of the components. I encourage farmers and communities to provide grass-roots, hands-on feedback to the Department of Agriculture. There is no point in having a trial if it can't be used to find the weeds in the crop.

Ellis to Chair Remote Schools Committee

The unique needs of rural and remote schools were recognised in a Ministerial Review in 1994 which stated that "Accepting rural reality means moving from a generic public policy to a more differentiated policy."^{Pv}

Following visits to schools in Geraldton and the Murchison, the Pilbara and the Great Southern, the Inquiry issued a discussion paper.

Six thousand five hundred copies were distributed to all government and non-government schools and other stakeholders, and it elicited 98 formal submissions.

The Rural & Remote Education Advisory Council (RREAC) was born from this background, and it is fitting that its first chair was Hon Derrick Tomlinson MLC who conducted the Inquiry. He was followed by Dr Murray Lake.

In May 2006, RREAC was restructured with the appointment of rural Members of Parliament as Chair. I am pleased to now have that honour, and will chair my first meeting in August.



In Parliament and Out on the Road

Hot parliamentary topics related to my electorate include GM canola, grain rail, fisheries and local government. I have provided media comment on these and numerous issues.

My role as Secretary to the Parliamentary Liberal Party provides me with a close working relationship with the Premier and his office, Ministers bringing legislation before the Party Room, and my fellow MPs. I also Chair the Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs. I was elected to attend the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association conference in Canada in July.

To keep grass-roots contact with branch members, I attended the Durack Division conference in Broome, and meetings of the State Executive Council and Pearce Division along with numerous regional branch meetings and the Kojonup and O'Connor AGMs.

In keeping with my promise to keep four wheels on the road, this year I have made trips to Wagin Woorama with the Premier; the Wheatbelt with Minister McSweeney; Geraldton with Minister Moore; Kalbarri with Minister Farragher; Port Gregory with Minister Moore; Koolanooka and Morawa with Minister Farragher; Dongara for a Mid West CCI meeting; Perenjori for the Mid West Hinterland Sustainable Communities Workshop; Kalannie Telecentre; Gingin Expo; and regular visits to the Geraldton electorate office.



Check out my updated website for Hot Topics, Issues, Photo Gallery and Media Articles
www.brianellis.com.au



Time Capsule

A packet of GM canola seed has been placed in a Legislative Council time capsule.

The autoclaved "CB™ Eclipse RR" GM seed provided by Canola Breeders WA Pty Ltd cannot be propagated.

As 2010 historically marked the 'Year of Choice' for canola growers in WA, I also provided a packet of conventional canola seed from my family's farm at Bindi Bindi.